

Citation for published version:

Bailey, S 2015, 'A Single Compound Alternative to a Buprenorphine/Naltrexone Combination, a functional kappa opioid receptor antagonist, produces antidepressant-like effects in mice.', *Journal of Psychopharmacology*, vol. 29, no. 8 (Abstract Supplement), pp. A22.

Publication date:
2015

Document Version
Early version, also known as pre-print

[Link to publication](#)

This is the author's submitted version of a conference abstract published in final form at:
<http://www.bap.org.uk/pdfs/2015BAPAbstractBook.pdf>

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A Single Compound Alternative to a Buprenorphine/Naltrexone Combination, a functional kappa opioid receptor antagonist, produces antidepressant-like effects in mice.

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Introduction: Kappa-opioid receptor antagonists have a potential as novel antidepressants. However, they have a long lasting duration of action which potentially limits their use (Carroll and Carlezon 2013. *J Med Chem* 56: 2178-2195). Previously, we reported that buprenorphine/naltrexone (1mg/kg) combination produced a functional short-acting kappa-antagonist that was non-sedating, non-rewarding and produced antidepressant-like effects in mice. (Almatroudi *et al.* 2013. Proceedings of the British Pharmacological Society at https://bps.conference-services.net/resources/344/3654/pdf/PHARM13_0127.pdf). Administration of buprenorphine and naltrexone as a single formulation is not achievable due to their different bioavailability, which could complicate patient compliance. Therefore, BU10119 was synthesized to have the pharmacological profile of the buprenorphine/naltrexone. Here, we report the effects of BU10119 treatment on depression-related behaviours.

Methods: CD-1 male mice (8-10 weeks) were used. Injections were administered intraperitoneally (10 ml/kg). Warm water (52°C) tail withdrawal assay was used to establish blockade of U50, 488 (10mg/kg) – induced antinociception by BU10119 (1 mg/kg) (n=5). For novelty-induced hypophagia (NIH), mice were individually housed and trained for 3 days to consume condensed milk. On test days, mice were injected with saline, buprenorphine/naltrexone combination (1 mg/kg), fluoxetine (20 mg/kg) or BU10119 (1mg/kg) one hour prior to testing behaviour (n=10). In the forced swim test (FST), a 6 min swim test session was recorded and behaviour scored manually (n=10). In the NIH test, the latency to drink and consumption were recorded in the home cage (day 4) and in the novel cage (day5). Data were analysed using a two-way repeated measures mixed model analysis or single measures one-way ANOVA (Invivostat 2.3).

Results: BU10119 (1 mg/kg) blocked the antinociceptive effects of U50, 488 (treatment*time $F_{(12, 60)} = 12.57$, $p < 0.001$). BU10119 significantly reduced tail withdrawal latency of U50 at 1, 8 and 24 h but not 48 h ($p < 0.001$, $p < 0.001$, $p < 0.01$ and $p = 0.7$). In the FST, there was a significant effect of drug-treatment on swimming and immobility behaviours (swimming: $F_{(3, 36)} = 6.58$, $P < 0.001$; immobility: $F_{(3, 36)} = 7.02$, $P < 0.001$). Post-hoc testing revealed that fluoxetine, buprenorphine/naltrexone combination and BU10119 significantly reduced the time spent immobile, compared to controls ($P < 0.001$). In the NIH test, there was a significant effect of drug treatment on the latency to drink in the novel cage ($F_{(4, 45)} = 9.15$, $P < 0.001$) but not consumption ($F_{(4, 45)} = 1.25$, $P = 0.3$). Fluoxetine, buprenorphine/naltrexone, norBNI (10 mg/kg) and BU10119 significantly reduced the latency to drink in the novel cage compared with controls ($P < 0.01$).

Conclusion: The BU10119 is a functional kappa-opioid receptor antagonist and produced antidepressant-like effects.

Supported by the government of Saudi Arabia.